

to block the PATRIOT Act to score political points, and I am grateful the Senate rejected that approach. The terrorists want to attack our country again and inflict even greater damage than they did on September 11, 2001. The PATRIOT Act is a vital tool for America in the war on terror. The act has torn down the wall between

law enforcement and intelligence officials to help us connect the dots and prevent attacks. The work of Congress on the PATRIOT Act is not finished. The act will expire next summer, but the terrorist threat to America will not expire on that schedule. I look forward to continuing to work with Congress to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Reduce Entitlement Spending *December 21, 2005*

The Senate vote to reduce entitlement spending is a victory for taxpayers, fiscal restraint, and responsible budgeting, and it will help keep us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. I applaud the Republicans in the House and Senate who supported

the legislation. This will be the first time in nearly a decade that Congress has reduced entitlement spending. This strong bill demonstrates our commitment to funding our Nation's priorities and ensuring that taxpayer money is spent wisely.

Remarks on Departure for Camp David, Maryland *December 22, 2005*

I hope you all have a happy holiday. This has been a year of strong progress toward a freer, more peaceful world and a prosperous America. We had three sets of elections in Iraq. This is an amazing moment in the history of liberty. A new Parliament has been seated in Afghanistan. Our economy is strong and getting stronger. People are working. We've added 4.5 million new jobs since April of 2003. Productivity is up. Small businesses are flourishing. Homeownership is high. It's been a good year for the American people.

We've got a lot of work to do. Yesterday and during this past week, the Congress acted in a wise way with the taxpayers' money, fiscally responsible set of appropriations bills that were passed that funded important priorities, key priorities—to make sure our troops have what they need to

do their job. The DOD bill did just that. Another key priority is to make sure the people in the gulf coast of our country get the help they need to help rebuild New Orleans and the Mississippi gulf coast. And there is a good deal of money available for those who suffered from Katrina and Rita.

It appears to me that the Congress understands we've got to keep the PATRIOT Act in place, that we're still under threat. There's still an enemy that wants to harm us, and they understand the PATRIOT Act is an important tool for those of us here in the executive branch to use to protect our fellow citizens. The Senate extended the PATRIOT Act by 6 months.

As we head into the holiday season, I do want to say to the families of those